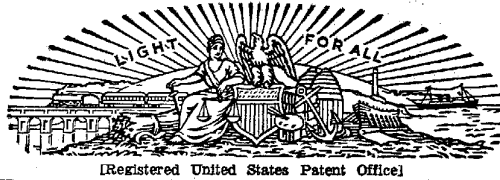


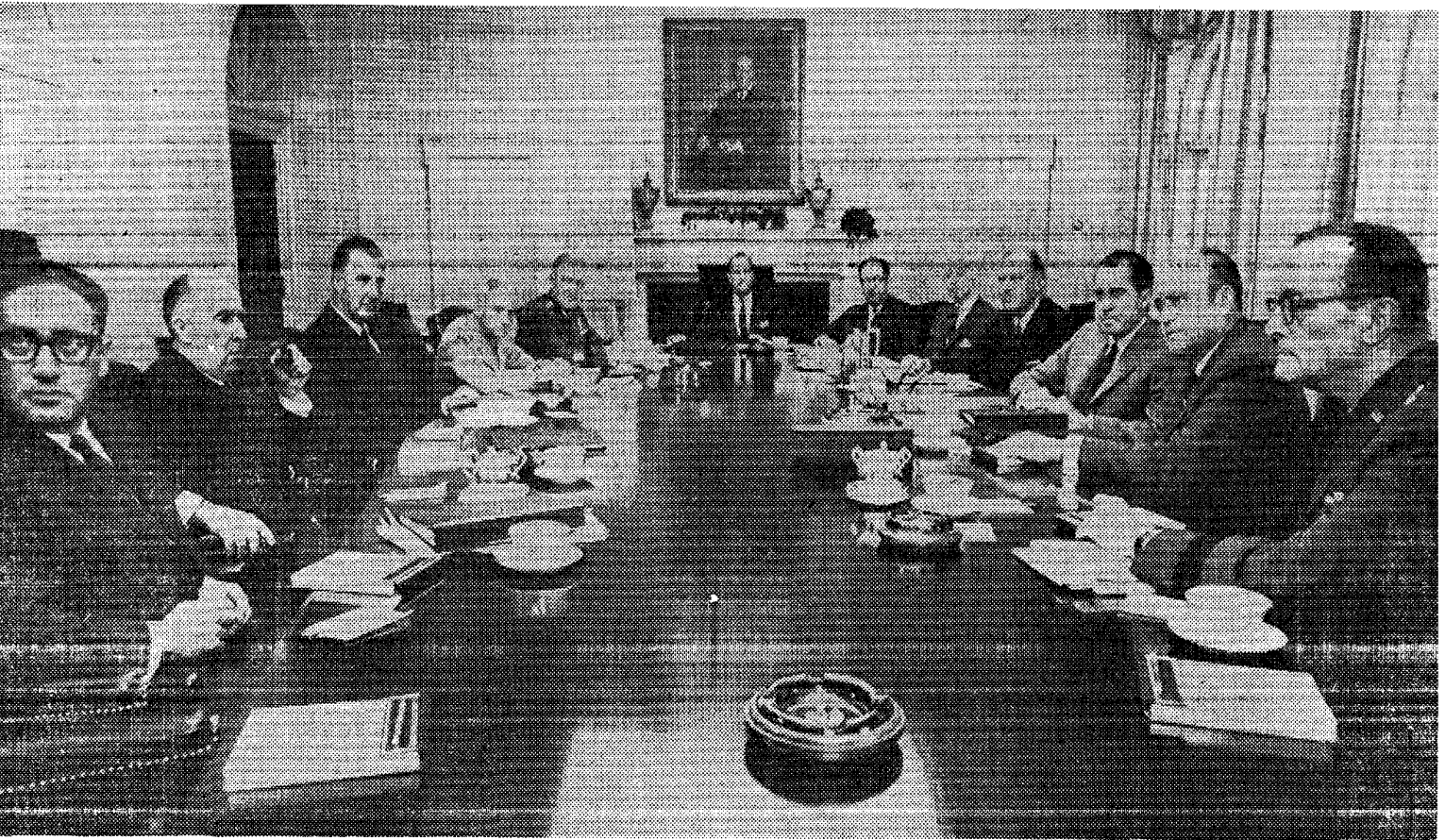
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BALTIMORE, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1969



VIETNAM PARLEY—President Nixon meets advisers in White House. From left: Henry Kissinger, John Mitchell, Vice President Agnew, Adm. John S. McCain, Gen. Greighton Abrams, Richard Helms, Philip Habib, Ellsworth Bunker, William Rogers, Mr. Nixon, Melvin Laird and Gen. Earle Wheeler.

The Weather

Today—Sunny and mild. High in the middle 80s. Sunday—Fair and warm. Probability of rain, 10 percent today and tonight. Temperature range: Today, 58-85. Yesterday, 54-78. Details are on Page B4.

The Washington Post

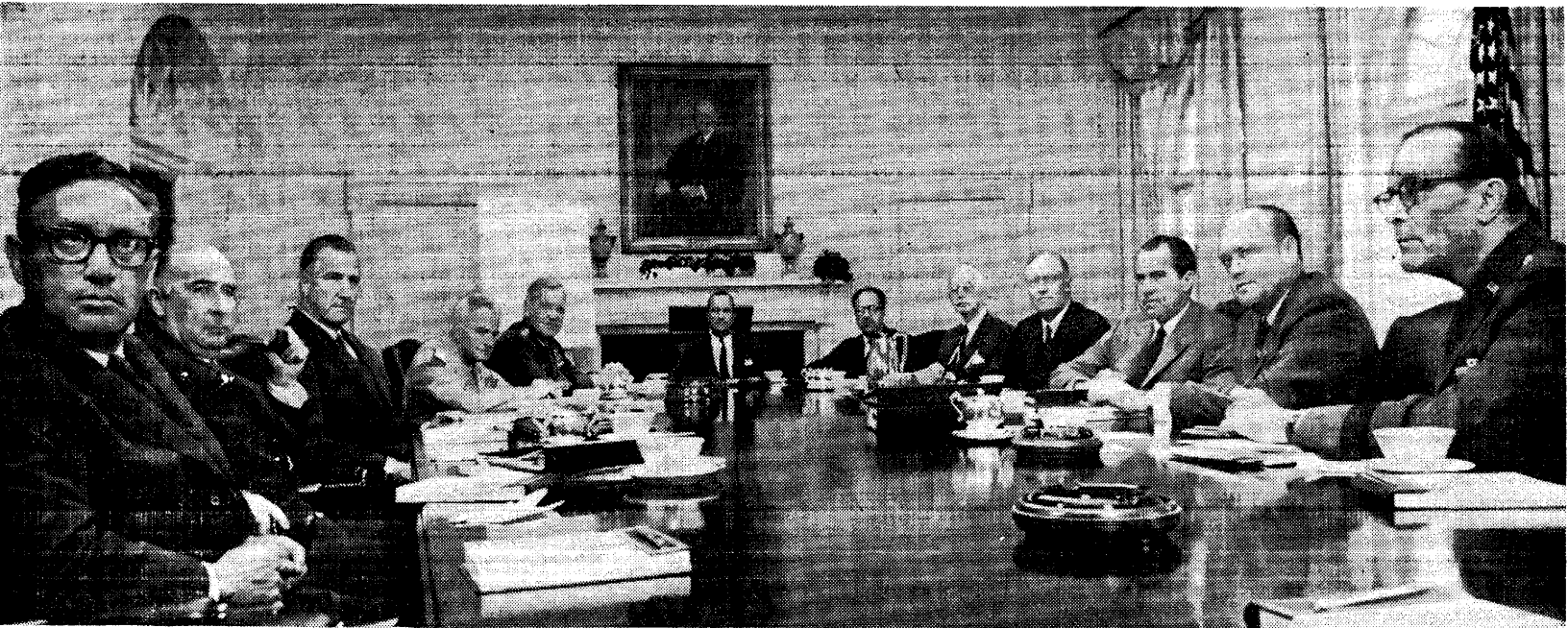
Times Herald

2d Year No. 282

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1969

PI



By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

President Nixon and advisers review the Vietnam war. From left, Henry A. Kissinger, adviser on national security; Attorney General Mitchell; Vice President Agnew;

Adm. John McCain, Pacific commander; Gen. Creighton Abrams, commander in Vietnam; CIA Director Richard Helms; Philip Habib of Paris talks team; Ambassador

to South Vietnam Ellsworth Bunker; Secretary of State Rogers; the President; Defense Secretary Laird; and Gen. Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

22 SEP 1969

Approved For Release 2001/08/07 : CIA-RDP83-00036R001300220001-2

Vietnam: What's Going On Here?

After a month of beachcombing and golf in the endless summer of Southern California, Richard Nixon returned to autumnal Washington, clearly determined to do something about his No. 1 foreign headache—the war in Vietnam. The moment for a U.S. initiative seemed propitious: Ho Chi Minh, the legendary leader of North Vietnam, was dead and the Communists had declared a three-day cease-fire in his honor. Yet, by the time the President convoked a blue-ribbon panel of Vietnam experts late last week, the conflict had resumed with all its accustomed ferocity—and, somehow, Mr. Nixon had managed to convert what might have been an opportunity into an almost unfathomable display of uncertainty of purpose on the part of the U.S.

True, there was strong reason to think that the President was about to announce another sizable U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam. But this solitary evidence of some consistency of policy was all but buried in a remarkable welter of American *faux pas* and false starts. Despite rigorous arm-twisting, the U.S. was unable last week to persuade South Vietnam to join it in observing the Communist truce—a difference of opinion that resulted in the most serious breach between the two allies since Saigon refused to attend the opening of the Paris peace talks last fall. And later in the week, the White House revealed that, after suspending B-52 raids against enemy targets in South Vietnam for 36 hours, it had suddenly ordered the giant bombers back into the air because the Communists had failed to respond to the “gesture.” (Given the fact that Viet Cong communications are notoriously poor—and that the U.S. itself would be hard put to respond to a peace signal within 36 hours—the Administration never satisfactorily explained

how the B-52 bombing suspension could have been construed as a serious test of enemy intentions.)

Judging from this puzzling performance, the conclusion seemed inescapable that the machinery of the Nixon Administration had—temporarily, at least—shown itself inadequate to cope with the complexities of the Vietnam war. And indeed, it was largely to chart a more coherent Vietnam course that the President decided to convene a meeting of his top advisers last week. The sober-faced group of men that assembled around the Cabinet-room table included the entire spectrum of the “Vietnam establishment”—Generals Creighton Abrams and Earle Wheeler, Adm. John McCain, Secretary of State William Rogers, Presidential assistant Henry Kissinger, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, CIA Director Richard Helms, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and Attorney General John Mitchell. For nearly four hours, while President Nixon listened and occasionally glanced at a nearby easel bearing military maps and graphs, his counselors ranged over the multifaceted problems of the Vietnam struggle. Then, after a brief lunch, Mr. Nixon flew off to Camp David, leaving behind the unanswered question of what, if anything, the meeting had accomplished.

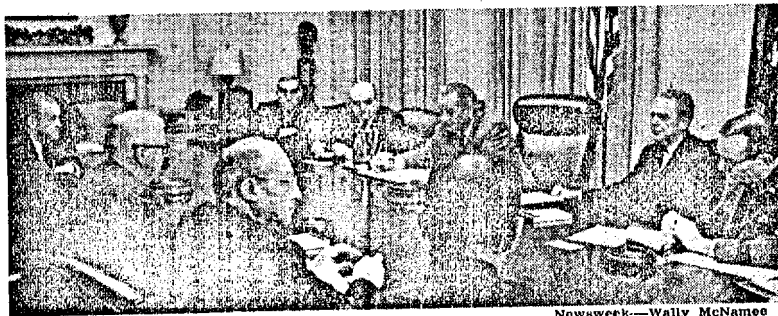
On that score, White House aides were of little help. Nonetheless, most Washington insiders felt certain that the

President had asked for—and received—the concurrence of his advisers for a second-slice pullout of as many as 25,000 to 40,000 U.S. troops. And some officials believed that Mr. Nixon might make the formal announcement of the withdrawal within a matter of days—perhaps before he appears at the United Nations this week to deliver a speech at the opening session of the General Assembly.

Issues: But in a sense, the timing and scale of future troop withdrawals were the least of Mr. Nixon's problems. For as last week's backing and filling revealed, the Administration has become increasingly divided over fundamental issues of war and peace. Ho Chi Minh's death—and the question of his successor (page 30)—provided a case in point. Seen from the White House, the disappearance of Ho was a providential stroke of luck. Mr. Nixon, who had received intelligence reports on Ho's failing health for at least two weeks before his death, reportedly interpreted the passing of the North Vietnamese leader as an opportunity to come to terms with a younger and more flexible generation of rulers in Hanoi. Said one U.S. official: “The atmosphere in the White House since Ho left the scene is something close to elation.” (Another possible reason for the Administration's upbeat mood was suggested by a foreign diplomat in Washington who told NEWSWEEK that he was convinced that the U.S. had received a peace signal

from Hanoi; if that was true, however, it was curious that the Viet Cong delegation to the Paris peace talks last week was even more vituperative than it usually is.)

Yet it was a dismaying fact that Mr. Nixon's interpretation of how Ho's death might affect the chances for peace was in direct conflict with that of most of the men within the U.S. Government who



Newsweek—Wally McNamara

... recalled similar scenes in the Johnson Administration



Newsweek

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Newsweek—Wally McNamara

The more things change: Amid a top-level policy review, *faux pas*, false starts and obfuscation... continued

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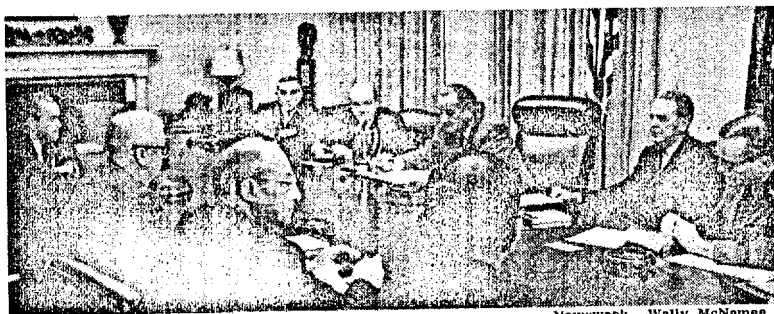
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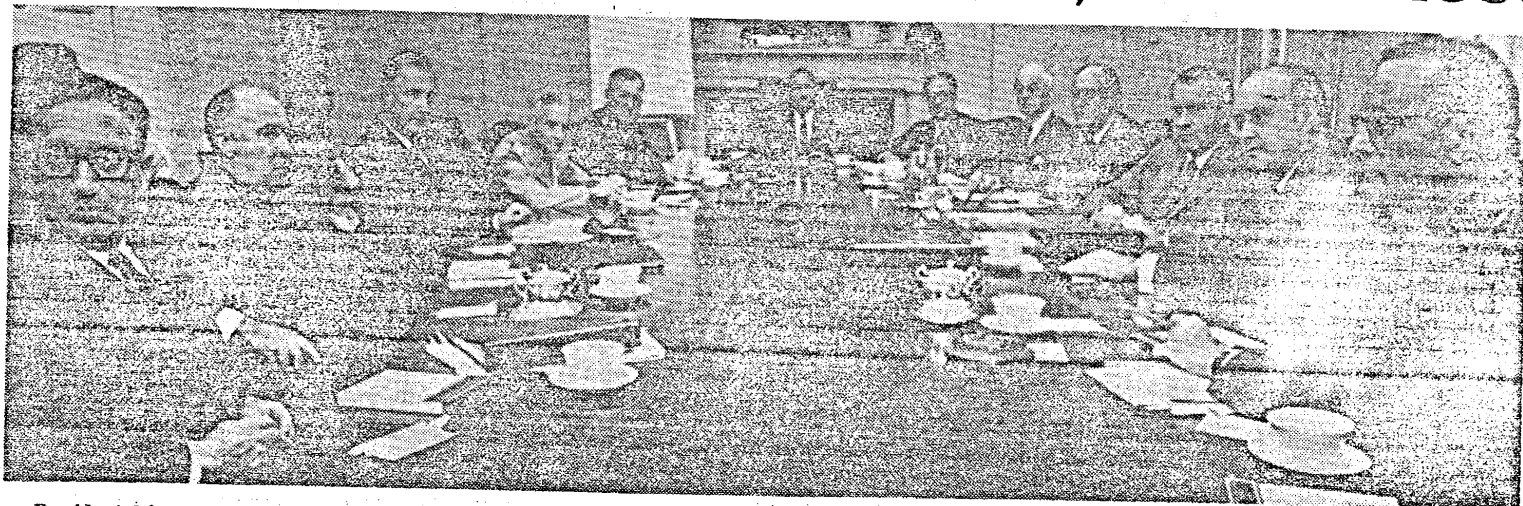
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Newsweek—Wally McNamee

The more things change: Amid a top-level policy review, *faux pas*, false starts and obfuscation... continued

EVENING STAR
C., Friday, September 12, 1969

Raids Halted to Test Hanoi, Then Resu



President Nixon meets with advisers on Vietnam in the White House. From left are: Henry Kissinger, presidential assistant; Atty. Gen. John Mitchell; Vice President Spiro Agnew;

Pacific commander-in-chief Adm. John S. McCain; U.S. commander in Vietnam Gen. Creighton Abrams; CIA Director Richard Helms; Philip Habib of the Paris negotiating

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Associated Press

ing another 35,000 by the end of the year. Officials admit the President is under heavy political pressure at home, mounting since he delayed the promised August decision on further troop reduction, to confirm that he really intends to "Vietnamize" the war. The argument goes that even though the peace negotiations are stuck in Paris, the enemy has reduced infiltration to the south and the South Vietnamese army is improving its combat capability to the point where fewer and fewer American forces are needed. one plan which would have 200,000 American forces out of Vietnam by the mid-term elections in November 1970. The remainder of the 300,000 in the 500,000 forces still there now would be recruited from a volunteer army. Official sources have indicated all this week that today's conference—which they insist was not caused by the death of Ho or by any dramatic change in the Vietnam situation—was called to focus on the promised presidential decision on withdrawing more American forces from Vietnam. But the suspension of the B52 raids, no matter how temporary — dramatized that this apparent gesture toward de-escalating the war shows the close link between military and diplomatic tactics for reaching a compromise settlement in the war. And Ziegler said earlier that all aspects of the Vietnam situation would be under review. The obvious forum for translating the B52 raid suspension into a diplomatic initiative would have been the Paris peace talks—which are scheduled to resume their weekly sessions tomorrow. Prior to the new military move in South Vietnam official sources in Washington were saying that tomorrow's meeting was not likely to yield anything spectacular. The weekly meeting, usually held on Thursday, was canceled last week at North Vietnam's request after Ho's death. The consensus among the government experts here has been that the first meeting after the postponement would come too soon to see any departure in policy by the continuing collective leadership in Hanoi. The policy advisers of the Nixon administration, W. Averell Harriman, has repeatedly cited no meant that any new American peace initiative would be premature. But critics outside the administration, and a minority of officials inside, had countered that the United States should make just such an initiative, showing conciliation, so as to strengthen any proponents of flexibility in the new Hanoi leadership. Another major question mark was how such a step would affect U.S. relations with Saigon. The former head of the American team in the peace negotiations for the Johnson administration, W. Averell Harriman, has repeatedly cited suspension of the B52 raids a just such a gesture. At the last meeting of the Paris peace negotiations Aug. 2 President Nixon's negotiator Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge noted to the Communists that the United States had curtailed the B52s raids in July. While the Lodge statement was aimed at proving Nixon's sincerity in wishing to negotiate, officials said the B52 curtailment then was part of the 10 percent cut from 1,800 average monthly raids which the Pentagon had announced for budgetary reasons in April. The White House gave this li

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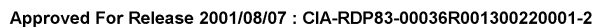
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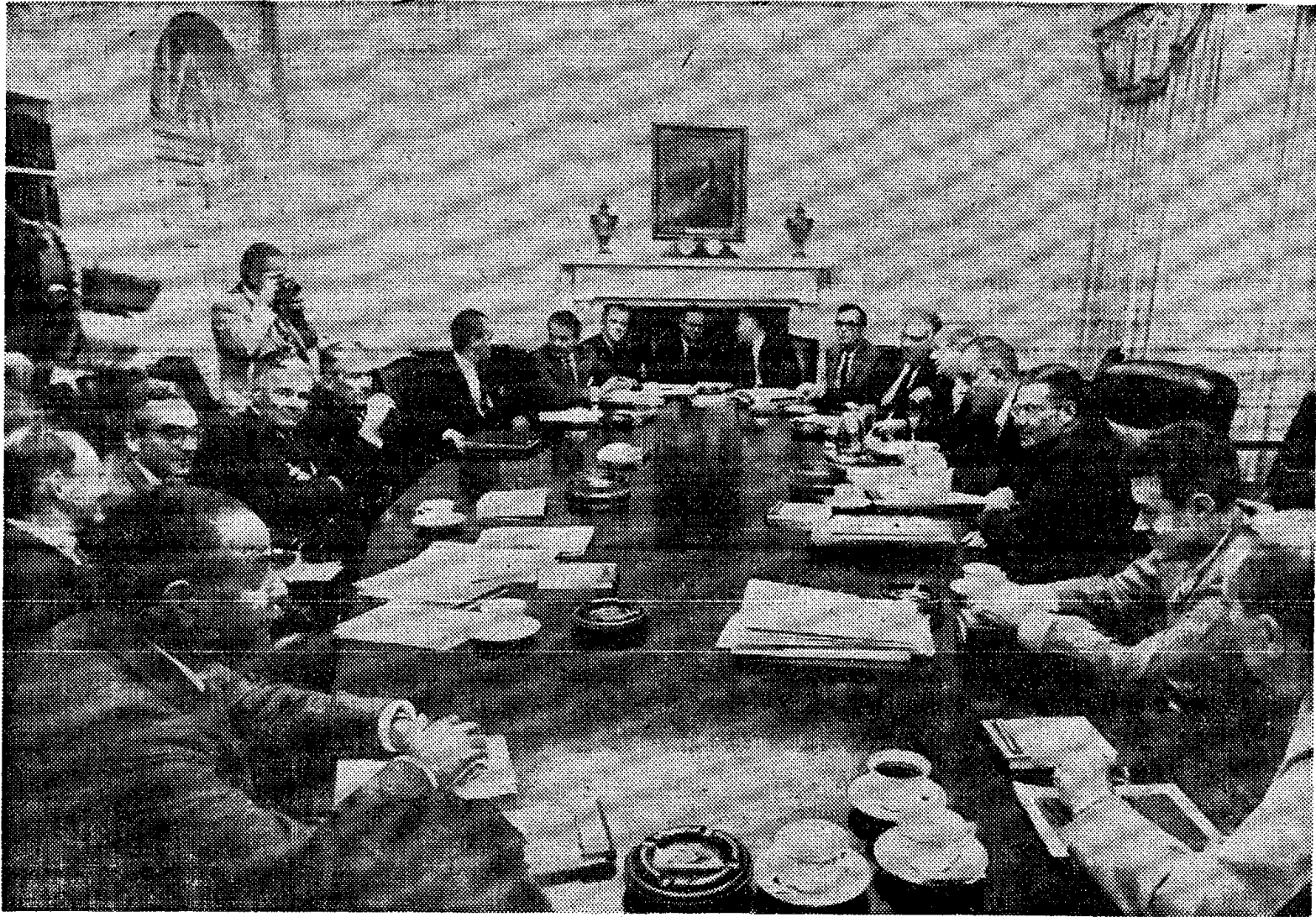
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United Press International

Attending yesterday's meeting with President Johnson were (clockwise around table, starting from left) Carl T. Rowan, retiring USIA director; McGeorge Bundy, special presidential assistant; Chester Cooper, assistant to McGeorge Bundy; Henry Cabot Lodge; Adm. William Raborn, director of the CIA; Richard Helms, deputy CIA director; Jack Valenti, presidential assistant; Horace Busby, presi-

dential assistant; Press Secretary Bill Moyers; Leonard Unger, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; William Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State; George Ball, Under Secretary of State; Dean Rusk; the President; Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense; Cyrus Vance, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Gen. Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

CONFIDENTIAL

DATE: July 26, 1965

25X1A

MEMORANDUM

TO:

FROM:

NO. OF PHOTOGRAPHS:

1

SOURCE:

United Press

YOUR REQUEST NUMBER:

SUBJECT:

White House Conference (McNamara report) July 21

RECEIVED

JUL 27 1965

GRAN

TO BE RETURNED:

for your retention

REMARKS:

cc: INR/DDC - Mr. William McAfee

CONFIDENTIAL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DATE: August 2, 1965

25X1A

MEMORANDUM

TO:

FROM: CS

NO. OF PHOTOGRAPHS:

1

SOURCE:

Time

YOUR REQUEST NUMBER:

SUBJECT:

President Johnson at cabinet meeting, requested

TO BE RETURNED:

retention

REMARKS:

cc: INR/DDC - Mr. William McAfee

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Tring
Viet Nam
Conference

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